

**WILLIAMSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION WORK SESSION #3
Wednesday, January 24, 2007**

A work session of the Williamsburg Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, January 24, 2007, at 4:00 p.m., in Conference Room 3A, Williamsburg Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Present were Commissioners Pons, McBeth, Hertzler, Driscoll, Joseph, Kafes and Young. Also present were Planning Director Nester, Deputy Planning Director Murphy, Zoning Administrator Rhodes and City Attorney Phillips.

OPEN FORUM

Jim Kammert, 108 Richmond Hill Court, thanked Mr. Nester for the material that has been posted to the City's web site. Concerning PCR #07-009, he questioned why you would want to put additional uses in the areas proposed to be rezoned to B-1 – why not use LB-1 instead, since it would create a more cohesive residential area.

Vic Smith, 646 Counselor's Way, said that it is obvious that a lot of things didn't hit home until it got to people's back yards. He cautioned about unintended consequences to the changes being proposed, and cited instances in other jurisdictions that have resulted in inappropriate development and redevelopment.

Nancy Sparling, 606 Counselor's Way, said that she was concerned about the proposed density increases, and quoted from a mystery she was reading that referred to Williamsburg as "magnificent," and suggested that it was important that this magnificence be preserved.

Nancy Carter, 3 Hague Close, said that the drive to create a greater density reminds her of Newport News – it seems like we are heading down the same path.

Stewart Goddin, 715 Goodwin Street, said that he doesn't see a vision for the City. A clarity of vision is needed so that people can get their arms around what we would like our City to become. This seems to be a piecemeal process.

Terence Wehle, 412 Harriet Tubman, suggested that we don't move so quickly – so a small amount of changing and see how it goes.

Ms. Sargent, Holly Hills, cautioned that the City not become a "plastic America." She said we should take a look and see what is happening in the area.

Nancy Carter suggested a tabletop model of the City, showing existing conditions, projects that have not yet been built, etc. It could be simple and graphic, with relative shapes indicating the scale of development.

Nancy Sparling said that she would like to visually see plans, especially to see what the architecture would look like. At Mr. Young's suggestion, Mr. Nester explained the City's plan review process.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION – CENTER CITY NORTH

Mr. Nester reviewed the package of changes to implement the recommendations of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, making the following points:

- The density is proposed to be increased in the B-1 and LB-1 Districts to up to 22 units per net acre with a special use permit, with up to 8 units per net acre allowed by right.
- City Council scaled back the density increase for South Henry Street to 14 units per net acre, even though the Plan recommended 22 units per net acre. The Commission may want to consider advertising for a maximum of 14 instead of the recommended 22 based on the Council's action.
- Small expansions of the B-1 District are proposed to simplify the zoning categories in the Center City area.
- The Downtown Parking District is proposed to be expanded, primarily in the area between North Boundary Street and the Dellys. A primary purpose is to encourage commercial development in the area across from the College, which could provide for additional student oriented businesses.
- The RDT District is proposed to be amended to create a requirement for a transitional screening buffer between duplex and multifamily dwellings in the RDT District and a single family residential PUD. This would apply to the portion of the Blayton Building property that abuts Crispus Attucks subdivision.

The Commission discussed the density issue at length (PCR #07-008 and 07-010):

- Mr. Joseph said he favored 14 instead of the 22 units per net acre proposed.
- Mrs. McBeth said she was OK with a limit of 14.
- Mr. Kafes disagreed, and said that the Commission can't second guess City Council – we should do what we think is best for the City. He said that we could use more buildings like the Sacalis Building, which could create a more vibrant area with more housing opportunities (including more affordable housing). He also noted that since we have no control over the College, it may be beneficial for the area adjacent to the College to be more intensely developed to make acquisition by the College not so attractive.

- Mr. Joseph disagreed, stating that he thinks 14 is a better density for the character of the Center City area than 22.
- Mrs. McBeth said that a proposal for 14 units per net acre, with a base by right density of 8, would take away some property rights of existing owners in the area (B-1 District).
- Mr. Hertzler applauded Mr. Kafes. He said density was discussed at length in the planning process, and we should continue to push for 22 units per net acre. This will encourage a more animated discussion at the public hearing, which is a good thing.
- Mr. Pons supported a density of 22. He said this is a different character area than the Center City South, including a large parking garage. He said he could envision something like extending the Imperial Building to the west and having condominiums to the upper floors.
- Mr. Driscoll said that people are losing site of the larger issue. He said that rather than density, the better question is what will buildings look like, what will their character be. He said that more density would provide an opportunity to bring back some of the residential density that used to exist in the area.
- Mr. Young said that even with the changes, we would not even approach the population of 25 years ago. He said that it was a shame that we were not able to engender such interest earlier in the process.
- Mr. Joseph asked about the limit of 10 units per lot. Mr. Nester said that a building on several lots would require vacation of lot lines to create a single lot for the building, which would be limited to 10 units.
- Mr. Pons said that the consensus of the Commission, after this extensive discussion, was to advertise the public hearing for 22 units per net acre. He noted that this is just for the advertisement, and does not represent a final decision.

PCR #07-009 – Expansion of the B-1 District

Mrs. McBeth noted that the purposed of these changes seemed to be to clear up the zoning in the Center City area. Mr. Nester said that this is the intent of the changes.

PCR #07-010 – LB-1 Density Increase

Mr. Young said that we could look at adjusting the maximum number of hotel/motel/timeshare rooms down to a maximum of 6 rooms instead of 10 – a tighter limit.

Mr. Pons cited a letter he received from a citizen, and said that he didn't want to see little condos on every corner. He suggested thinking about a cap of no more than 150 new units in the Center City area. Mr. Nester questioned the legality of such a restriction.

There was more discussion of tighter restrictions on timeshares and fractional ownerships, expressing a concern about a large project in the Center City area. Mr. Nester noted that more than 10 rooms in the B-1 District requires a special use permit.

Mr. Joseph worried about the power that the City has to deny a special use permit – how can we say yes to one and no to another.

Mr. Phillips said that each special use permit is considered on its own merits. Reasonable uses are allowed by right, and City Council has great flexibility in deciding whether or not to approve a special use permit.

Mr. Hertzler noted that getting a special use permit is not an easy process.

Mr. Pons said we need to be careful about limiting the types of business uses allowed in the Center City area.

Mr. Joseph said that density also includes the size of buildings. The Digges building on South Henry Street has a low residential density, but is a large structure.

Mrs. McBeth said that a 10 room maximum for hotels/motels/timeshares as a by right use is an appropriate limit.

PCR #07-011 – Downtown Parking District Expansion

Mrs. McBeth, Mr. Pons and Mr. Young agreed that this was a good step for the area, and would encourage new businesses.

PCR #07-012 – RDT Buffer Requirements

The consensus was that this proposal was acceptable.

Mr. Nester reminded the citizens at the meeting of the additional information that has been posted on the City's web site, and suggested that citizens take advantage of signing up for automatic notifications.

OPEN FORUM

Mr. Kammert again thanked Mr. Nester for the posted information, and said that it is a good way to initiate discussion. He again questioned the B-1 expansion, and said that if you aren't after all of the B-1 uses, why not rezone to LB-1. He disagreed with the College being underserved, and noted that several spaces in the Triangle Building have been vacant for some time – it would be a good site for student oriented businesses. Concerning the Sacalis Building, he said that if it is a good use and has a density of 54 units per net acre, going to 22 units per net acre will not reproduce the character of that

building. He noted that a lot of pressure is being put on the ARB, and noted that it is very hard for us to say no to people. He said he likes the College Corner building, but asked again for a vision of the downtown area. He suggested a process where developers get together with citizens to discuss proposed developments.

Terence Wehle said that we are talking about the downtown like there is something wrong with it – he likes it just the way it is. He said he likes the Sacalis Building, but wouldn't want rows of similar buildings. He said that the townhouse density of New Town is 12 units/acre, and the apartment density is 18 units/acre. He said that for new residential development, we should expect two cars per house – automobiles are a way of life. He said, concerning special use permits, why would you not approve the maximum density of the developer does everything that you want – he doesn't see "no" happening. The proposed B-1 District beside the Blayton Building is a problem – if an expansion of the Blayton Building for residential use was done in this area, it would allow preservation of the existing green space between the Blayton Building and Crispus Attucks – development of the proposed B-1 area as commercial would guarantee the replacement of the green space with residential uses. He noted that we haven't heard from the WRHA – it would be good to hear from them.

Nancy Sparling expressed concerns about the proposed retail expansion in the Center City area – what is going in? Most of her friends don't go downtown to shop.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Douglas Pons, Chairman
Williamsburg Planning Commission